



## Surf School

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### Teachers' Notes

This book is rich in themes and information. The possibilities for questions, tasks and activities were numerous, and an attempt has been made to cover as many as possible. The aim is for teachers to use the Teachers' Notes, build on them and adapt them to suit the interest and abilities of their students. Teachers are encouraged to use them as stepping stones for their own ideas. In so doing, it is hoped students will get enjoyment and benefit from the enriching experience that reading and working on this text can bring. The questions, tasks and activities generally follow a thematic approach, while also including comprehension questions.



## Synopsis

Fifteen-year-old Tilly, Fran, Marlee and Pink are surfer girls – friends since their first surf lesson at the Diamond Beach Surf School run by Tilly’s dad, Phil.

Phil has big plans for the Surf School this year – until he is seriously injured in a hit-and-run accident. Tilly is determined to keep her dad’s business running and her friends want to help. But Marlee is training for the club surfing competition – determined to win a new board and beat the moody Kyle; Pink is hopelessly in love with a stranger in town; and Fran is stuck in the middle of her warring friends.

As the girls negotiate their friendships, disappointments and dreams, the summer is set to explode!

## Characters

Marlee Rose Finn

Matilda (aka Tilly) Elizabeth Anne Hoye

Pink (Jasmine) Fuller  
Fran

Phil Hoye – Tilly’s father

Sam Hoye – Tilly’s brother

Christie Fuller – Pink’s mother.

Mitch Fuller – Pink’s father

Kyle Parker

Jamie

Kim (aka Reg Pitt)

Shane Parker – Kyle’s father and an instructor at the Surf School.

Evelyn – Fran’s mother

Jack Finn – Marlee’s father



# Tasks and Activities

## Table of Characters

Draw up a table of five columns with the following headings:

Name of character; Role in the novel; Physical description; Strengths; Weaknesses.

1. Choose five characters from the text and fill in the appropriate information under the different column headings. When discussing the character strengths and weaknesses, include examples/evidence (with page references) to back up your opinions.

\* With which character in this book do you most identify? Why?

Write two paragraphs to illustrate your answer.

\* With which character in this book do you least identify? Why?

Write two paragraphs to illustrate your answer.

## Friends and Relationships

\* By pointing out that making their pact really meant something to her, do you think Marlee is telling Tilly that she feels let down by her, despite the situation in which Tilly finds herself? Do you think this is being fair?

1. Conversely, why does Tilly feel let down by Marlee (pp96–7)?

2. How much do you think Tilly and Marlee's youth and inexperience played a role in the way they handle the hurdles in their friendship (pp113–4)?

3. Do you think time away from each other will help Marlee and Tilly's friendship? Why?

4. When the four girls are together at Pink's house getting ready for the conference dinner, what indications are there that the relationship between Tilly and Marlee is still on shaky ground (pp141–3; also pp161–2)?

\* At the conference dinner, Pink begins to have misgivings about Kim (p147). Why, then, do you think she asks him to take her away from the hotel?

1. Why do you think Pink lied to the police for Kim?

2. What indications are there that Pink is naïve when it comes to being infatuated with boys?



\* Throughout Chapter Seven (pp98) Tilly is rather restless and testy. Why do you think this is so?

1. Even Fran and Pink comment on how bossy and mean Tilly has become recently. Give examples that support their opinion.

2. Was Tilly justified in her tirade against Sam and his friends when she returned from the hospital (pp110–2)? Why?

\* On p25 we learn that Marlee has an unopened letter from her father in her school bag. Why has she not read it?

1. What can you ascertain from the book about Marlee's relationship with her parents, especially her father?

2. What hints are there for the possible reason for Marlee's father's alcoholism?

\* On pp48–50 we get an insight into the character of Pink's mother Christie. How would you describe her?

1. How does she differ from Pink?

\* There are hints that Pink feels neglected by her mother (p19 and p48). Then, on pp159–60, we are told that Pink feels 'as small as a tiny pin head' after the way her parents greeted her when she returned from her ride with Kim. Why do you think she felt this way?

1. How would you have reacted in such a situation?

2. Were her parents too harsh with her punishment? Why?

\* Describe the relationship between Kyle and Shane, with special reference to pp89–90.

\* What kind of relationship do Tilly and Sam have with Phil? How does Phil's accident affect the family dynamics?

\* Phil objects to Tilly involving her friends in the running of the Surf School while he's in hospital (pp74–6). Why?

1. How does Tilly refer to her friends during this argument with her father, and how does she justify their involvement?

2. What do you think Tilly means when she later tells Marlee she is 'the family of my heart' (p132)?

3. Marlee made a flyer asking for assistance with information about Phil's accident (p59). What does this act say about Marlee's feelings for Tilly and her family?

4. How would you design such a flyer? Provide an illustration of what you have designed.



\* How would you describe the relationship dynamics between the following people:

1. Tilly and Marlee
2. The four girls as a group
3. Marlee & Kyle
4. Pink & Kim
5. Shane & Tilly/Kyle/Marlee
6. Tilly & Sam
7. Tilly & Jamie
8. Pink & Jamie

### The Blood Book

\* Why do Tilly and Marlee start the Blood Book? Why do they give it that title?

\* Do you have a very close friend to whom you reveal your innermost thoughts and feelings? If so, how do you communicate these?

1. Having read Surf School, do you think a book similar to the Blood Book would be a good way to communicate with your friend? Why or why not?

2. What are the advantages of writing down your thoughts and feelings over discussing them face-to-face? What are the disadvantages?

\* Tilly and Marlee show their dedication to the Blood Book and their plan to win the club comp by each pressing a drop of blood onto the book's first page (p2).

1. Children can become 'blood' brothers or sisters by pricking their fingers and mixing together the blood in order to cement their friendship.

What is the origin of this custom? You may find it helpful to research customs of the Native American Indians. Do you think this practice has become less common? Why or why not?

\* What purpose does the inclusion of the Blood Book serve in Surf School?

1. If you had to categorise the Blood Book, what type of a book would you call it?

2. How would the novel be affected if the Blood Book entries were removed?

3. If you were to remove the Blood Book from the novel, how would you incorporate its contents into the actual text of the story?



## Dreams and Ambitions

\* Marlee and Tilly have a dream – to go on the surfing World Championship Tour together. They make a pact to enter the club comp as their first step on the way to making that dream come true.

1. What are the other levels Marlee plans to reach in order to achieve her ultimate goal of joining the World Championship Tour (p69)?

2. As the novel unfolds, how do Tilly's and Marlee's attitudes to this dream and the comp change?

3. What happens to influence those changes?

\* Marlee creates a training plan to ensure she can enter and win the club comp and a new surf board, including going on a pamphlet run several days a week.

1. List the other actions Marlee takes in the weeks before the comp.

2. What do these actions say about Marlee's dedication to her dream?

3. What effect do they have on her ability to reach her goal?

\* Would you call Marlee a poor loser (pp169–70)? What can you ascertain from the article in the Diamond Beach Daily (pp171–2)?

\* Do you think Marlee should have accepted the surfboard from Kyle (pp177–9)? Why?

1. What are the reasons Marlee gives Tilly for not accepting the surfboard from Kyle (p187)?

2. What does Marlee's attitude to Jordie's offer say about her personality and her ambitions (pp193–4)?

\* What about Kyle? He wants to win the club comp too, but he says he's not interested in the new surf board.

1. Why does he really want to win the comp?

2. What do you learn about his training regime from Surf School?

\* Kyle tells Marlee that he didn't cheat her out of the competition; rather he had psyched her out. What exactly did he mean?

1. Do you think this is a fair strategy to apply in a competition (pp178–9)?

2. What does Kyle's attitude tell you about his character?



\* Tilly plans to put what she has learned in Business Studies into practice and set up a database for the Surf School, as well as tidy up the office, to help her father achieve his dream of running the Surf School full time (p58).

1. Why do you think that Tilly took on the responsibility of reorganising and running her dad's Surf School?

2. What has she achieved by 13 December (p71)? Do you think Tilly's attitude has alienated her from Shane and her friends or does she just take on too much responsibility?

3. Imagine your parents have a business in which they do not use computers. Prepare a presentation to show them how computers can benefit their business. As well as a written report, make use of computer technology in your presentation, e.g. PowerPoint.

4. Why does Tilly feel guilty (p54)? Is she being too hard on herself or is she justified in feeling this way? Why? Would you accept Tilly's explanations for her erratic behaviour (p123)? Why?

\* Fran makes jewellery and would one day like to design surf wear. She made leather anklets as presents for her friends to celebrate the anniversary of the day they met and, once the Surf School has been renovated, she plans to sell her jewellery to the Surf School customers.

1. How does Fran display and sell her jewellery at the school?

2. What other methods could Fran use to sell and market her creations?

3. By the end of the novel, what progress has Fran made towards her dream of designing surf wear?

4. Have you ever made items that you wanted to sell? How did you go about selling your work?

\* Does Pink have any dreams or ambitions? What are they, and how does she go about achieving them?

\* How much do you think dedication plays a role in achieving your goals and ambitions?

\* What role does stress play in the way people behave in certain situations? Illustrate your answer by drawing examples from the text, as well as from your own experiences.





## Surfing and the Surfing Culture

- \* Find the names of famous Australian surfers – male and female, past and present – and write a few biographical lines about each.
- \* Compile an instruction manual on how to surf and list the equipment needed.
- \* Find out if there really are surfing academies and then name them. Perhaps you should also consider institutions such as the Australian Institute of Sport, and find out if surfing is one of their areas of study.
- \* Using an atlas, draw/trace a map of the world. Locate and mark in the major surf beaches of the world.
- \* Tilly lists her five favourite surfing champions (p5). Write a brief biographical piece of no more than two paragraphs on at least three of these champions.
- \* What are the three things Shane told his students to remember when they took off to surf (p84)?
  1. What advice did he give on surf etiquette?
  2. When Kyle and Marlee returned to the beach, after the young student surfers were caught up in the rip, do you think Shane was being fair to them (pp89–90)? Why?
- \* According to Fran’s mother, Evelyn, what makes a good surfer (p158)?
  1. How does Fran describe herself as a surfer (p69)?
- \* How are the adults involved in surfing? Which characters have parents who surf, or are involved in a related industry?
- \* The world junior girl’s surfing champion is an Australian (Sally Fitzgibbons) and nine of the top fifteen women surfers in the world are Australian. What has changed for women’s surfing in Australia since the 1970s?

## Language

- \* Surf School uses some slang specific to surf culture. Prepare a glossary of any terms you come across, including the following:
  - \* grom (p5)
  - \* poo shooters (p24)
  - \* pig slop (p25)
  - \* getting tubed (p39)
  - \* rashies (p91)





- \* Describe a thruster surfboard, and why Marlee wants one (p37).
- \* On the day everyone gathers to help paint the Surf School, Pink uses the word namaste. From which language does the word come and what does it mean? Why do you think Pink chooses to use this word (p101)?
- \* What is a trilby (p78)? Describe it.
- \* What is a tirade (p89)?
- \* What is a freeloader (p120)?

### Health, Fitness & Training

- \* What training regime do Tilly and Marlee set for themselves in the lead-up to the competition?
  1. Do they stick to the routine?
  2. How does their respective dedication affect their competition results?
- \* Do Marlee's and Tilly's attitudes to training affect their relationship? How and why?
- \* Are you involved in organised sport? If so, what fitness regime are you required to follow? Draw up a plan of the training, exercise and diet recommended by your coach.
- \* How do elite and professional athletes maintain their health and fitness, and hone the skills required to participate in their chosen sports? Imagine you are one of these athletes and write a diary of your schedule, together with comments on how you are coping, your rate of improvement, etc.
- \* On p26 reference is made to Mr Graham, the head of sport at Marlee and Kyle's school, and his clipboard, stopwatch and scientific approach to sport. What role do you think science plays in sport, especially in training?
- \* How important is mental fitness in sport and how do you achieve it? What are some of the ways that Marlee increased her mental fitness during the novel?



## Geography

- \* Kim says he has spent time in the Maldives. What and where are the Maldives? Find out about their history and geography (p20).
  - \* In Australia, apart from the different directions from which they blow, what are the marked differences between northerly and southerly winds? Find out why is this so (p35).
  - \* What was it in the misty spray from the ocean that caused house and car windows to frost and stiffen beach towels (p35)?
  - \* In terms of weather, what surfing conditions are prevalent during the winter and infrequent in the summer (p37)?
  - \* What is a rip? Why is it dangerous (pp86–8) ?
1. What does Marlee tell the two young surfing students to do to get themselves safely through the rip?
  2. What happens to them and to Marlee?
  3. Each year the pro surfers follow a world circuit tour. Find a map and mark the countries the tour goes to.

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